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ABSTRACT

The environment experienced by many retired faculty is described, and the benefits of a college or center of emeritus faculty are identified. A center of emeritus professors that is recognized as an official entity of a university can help mobilize and encourage retirees to continue their service to the institution and the community. The retirees can organize colloquia, develop special projects that are too time-consuming for regular faculty, and aid in fund-raising, alumni activities, and community relations. Projects of an Emeritus College at Southern Illinois University include: summer educational and recreational programs, a tutorial and mentorship service to students, a series of adult education classes and lectures at a senior citizens center, and preretirement discussions for university staff. The Southern Illinois center has an annual budget, fiscal officer, office help, and an advisory board of retired faculty who meet monthly. None of the center's projects duplicates, overlaps, or displaces the regular teaching, research, or advisement activities of the regular faculty. For the student and faculty in the gerontology program, there is an added opportunity for field practice, and an additional resource for gerontological research and innovation. (SW)

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Professors in Retirement: The Emeritus College Model

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A person isn't "elderly" until he or she retires. I mean "elderly" in terms of achieving a different role, status, and self-image. That goes for all professionals. Doctors and lawyers almost never retire, probably because they are private entrepreneurs of sorts, unless, of course, it's for ill health or for some problem in relationships that makes continued employment unpleasant.

College professors can be made to retire at age 70. Many do retire earlier, partly because of a good pension if they have had a long and successful career, but many because they have become tired and frustrated with the academic bureaucracy. They rarely retire to spend their time fishing, bowling, hunting, or watching TV as many of their blue-collar counterparts do. Most spend their leisure time in retirement reading, writing, consulting, or part-time teaching. A survey undertaken by the Teachers Insurance & Annuity Association in 1982 lists activities retired participants pursue as follows:

READING	92%
SOCIALIZING WITH FRIENDS	75%
GARDENING/HOME IMPROVEMENT	71%

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TRAVEL	66%
HOBBIES	61%
WRITING OR PAINTING	44%
CHURCH ACTIVITY	36%
COMMUNITY SERVICE	35%
SPORTS, PHYSICAL FITNESS	34%
PROFESSIONAL OR JOB RELATED ORGANIZATIONS	32%
CIVIC, FRATERNAL GROUP	30%
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS	28%
RETIREES CLUB	24%

A similar study made in Southern Illinois with 102 retired professors responding out of 191 living in the area showed findings consistent with those of the TIAA. In neither study was there any indication of significant professional involvement or continued interest in the university where they may have been employed for many years. Of course, if the retired professor had a part-time teaching or research assignment at the university he or she naturally considered himself or herself as part of the academic community. Even then, it was on a different basis--just to teach the courses with as little involvement in the "business" of the department or college as possible. And that seems to suit the non-retired working faculty just fine. The emeriti in the department are made to feel like guests--nice to have you around but don't stay too long. If they are not working but do have

the use of an office and telephone (local calls only!) some of the faculty don't even know them, and students in the department never heard of them. Oh, they usually have a gold parking sticker (instead of a watch) and sometimes tickets to the football games (especially if the team has had a losing season), and they do have a library card and a mailbox in the department. But most emeriti rarely make full use of their office space and some retired professors actually express negative or hostile feelings against real or imagined injustices incurred during or after their term of employment.

But that is not to say that retired professors are unhappy in their retirement. A survey by the AAUP in 1983 showed that almost all are "satisfied" with their state, their health, and their income. The average annual household income in 1981 was $27,000, including income from pensions, investments, and part-time work in some cases. The SIU survey reported that emeriti receive 51% of their income from state pensions, 11 percent from social security, 20 percent from investments, 8 percent from other pensions, and only 6 percent from employment. In both the SIU and TIAA survey more than ninety percent list their health as good or fair. The average age of a retiree was 68 years and almost two-thirds continue living in the community near the university where they worked.

Yet to most emeriti retirement is not exactly a state of nirvana. The existence of a number of organizations and academic retirement communities seem to indicate that retired professors are trying to keep their intellectual juices flowing. Despite the fact that many emeriti boast that they are "busier now than when they worked full time" many do feel a sense of alienation from their former workplace, colleagues, and disciplines. It's not that individual faculty cannot find interesting projects, hobbies, activities

to occupy their time. Nor do I wish to underestimate the facilities and privileges available to them at the university. But retired faculty have now joined a minority group and like all minorities, like women and blacks, relationships and associations with their own kind give members a sense of belonging, of common interest and feeling and understanding, and of group support.

At the same time, universities and communities miss the skill, talent, and experience of the retirees who, especially in view of their good health and income security, can, as volunteers or at nominal cost, provide significant services to a younger generation of faculty, students, or citizens and organizations in the community. And many emeriti do just that; volunteer as individuals in hospitals, senior centers, schools, or other agencies. Some are active with organizations such as AARP or Gray Panthers.

What seems to be missing is an organization of retired faculty attached to the university that can invite the participation in activities that both benefit the university and community, as well as the retired professors themselves.

There are some organized groups of retired faculty on campus. They are mostly unofficial emeritus centers or faculty clubs with vague objectives and invisible support, involving their members in a variety of social activities, pot-luck dinners, picnics or lectures. Some do encourage volunteer activities for social agencies and some are concerned with protecting an unfunded state pension system. But membership is usually individual, inner-directed, social, with no systemic relationship to the university or community, meeting in a spare old house or facility at the largess of benevolent university president who is himself approaching retirement.

I am suggesting that a college or center of emeritus faculty, recognized and accepted as an official entity of a university, can serve as a vehicle for mobilizing and encouraging

retirees to continue their service to the institution and the community. Emeriti in such an organization can be stimulated to organize colloquia, develop special projects which regular faculty do not have time to do, can aid the administration in fund-raising, alumni activities, community relations. An emeritus presence, as an official part of the university family, injects a grandparental ambience on campus that can help ease pressure between student and teacher, faculty and administration, university and community. Supported by a progressive administration and a sympathetic faculty such a center or college can corral and direct the energies, skills, and experience of retirees into a multitude of voluntary services for the benefit of students, faculty, administration, and community agencies.

Retired faculty on campus have some unique qualities that give them advantages for open and progressive practices: They seek no tenure, promotion, or salary increases. They are beholden to no chairperson, dean or vice-president. Their incomes are fixed, their careers ended. They can speak their piece with impunity. There is some advantage, after all, in being a "has-been."

In Southern Illinois University we have organized an Emeritus College, at first tentatively, but as projects developed, then as an official entity of the university with an account number and an annual budget, fiscal officer, office and part-time secretary. Its activities and major policies are reviewed by an "advisory board" now numbering about fifty retired faculty members who meet monthly. Membership on the board is suggested by current active board members and attendance at meetings have been averaging between 25 and 30. Activities are conducted by committees with chairpersons who report their

progress at the board meetings and published in a newsletter that's sent out monthly to all emeriti.

* A monthly slide-show and travelogue at the local public library presented by retired faculty and open to the public.
* An Alumeritus Week planned for summer aimed to draw alumni families back to the campus to participate with emeriti in educational and recreational programs, patterned on the Elderhostel plan.
* A tutorial and mentorship service to students, many of minority background, and mainly in math, psychology, and the sciences.
* A series of adult education classes and lectures at the local senior citizens center.
* A series of pre-retirement discussions for university staff and faculty and, through Continuing Education, for employees of business and industry in the community.
* A project to improve the relationship between migrant workers and townspeople in some rural areas.
* Recruitment of students by reviewing curricula and addressing student groups in high schools and community colleges.
* Research and feasibility studies in cooperation with university and community projects.

None of these projects duplicates, overlaps, or in any sense displaces the regular teaching, research, or advisement activities of the regular faculty. They are complementary aimed to expand and enrich their responsibilities, and, in fact, deans, faculty and advisors have requested emeriti involvement because of the skill and experience of the retirees--

and because their services are free.

As gerontologists we know that, with financial insecurity removed, and given reasonably good health, the greatest needs of retirees, especially those with professional experience, are acceptance and recognition, and the opportunity to exercise their skills, intellect, and social commitments for positive accomplishments. An organized vehicle such as an emeritus college, recognized and accepted by faculty and students, supported by administration, can recruit and direct the talents of retirees to needed projects and fuel their ego-needs with suitable gestures of recognition.

In terms of financial rewards it may be the most cost-effective service the university can render. The involvement of emeriti is voluntary, and support services such as secretarial or student work, telephone, mailing can usually be extracted with very little sacrifice, from one or another of an underworked or over-budgeted administrative or academic department which exists on most campuses. A retired professor with some experience in social work, psychology, rehabilitation, or health education and an interest in organizing such a project can be appointed on a part-time basis at relatively modest cost.

For the emeritus faculty the value of the college is obvious and the benefits to the university and community quite apparent. For the student and faculty in gerontology there is an added opportunity for a different kind of field practice, and additional resource for gerontological research and innovative experimentation. If the university has a Gerontological Institute, or some inter-disciplinary council dealing with the aged, the presence of a retired faculty representative may be a positive addition to the curriculum. Emeriti representation on the Faculty Senate or Graduate Council would support the

involvement of retired faculty on campus and enhance the visibility and understanding of gerontology education for all segments of the university family. An emeritus center building to supplement a student center for meetings and affairs of students and faculty as well as use by university retirees and community elders would further support the presence of an inter-generational relationship.

But in the political atmosphere that exists on some campuses creating any new administrative entity is not always greeted with enthusiasm. Theoretically, an organization of emeriti professors would seem to be least threatening of all. There is no turf to protect and neither salary nor tenure is at risk. Still, doubt and opposition is potentially present and skepticism and suspicion on the part of administrators, working faculty as well as with some retired professors themselves may be anticipated. To working faculty and administration an Emeritus organization on campus may indicate a desire to "hold on", not to let go and allow leadership to pass to a younger generation of scholars, to hold back needed change and progress. To retirees themselves the image may conjur up another bureaucratic institution such as one from which they only recently (and happily) escaped. Some emeriti may indeed see an emeritus college as a threat to independent scholarship of creative academics who reject any affiliations. So he it. There is no pressure to do anything they don't want to do. An emeritus college has no power base and most emeriti have no desire to relive their academic lives on campus.

An Emeritus College, however, is not for everyone. Many retired faculty are not suffering for the lack of it and many can find their own satisfactions in artistic, intellectual, recreational or volunteer activities available in almost every university community in

the land. Nor is such a college suitable for all institutions of higher education. In large cities there are so many institutional opportunities and work possibilities as perhaps to make such a center seem irrelevant. And very small colleges may find too few retired faculty residing in their vicinity to make an emeritus formal organization impractical. But there are many universities in rural or small city enclaves that do keep their retirees in the community, even attract retired educators from larger cities. For these the presence of an organized emeritus group on campus would be of mutual benefit.

Different locations and different institutions may dictate unique organizational structures suitable to historical and political circumstances. But whatever form an emeritus organization takes, it must first of all have the support of the top administration, a visible and secure structure, and an interested constituency of emeriti.

In our bureaucratic society the lonely individual finds fighting city hall frustrating and defeating. We are all joiners in our own way and an organized vehicle on own campuses for retired faculty can provide the base and support for continuing individual creativity, and offer to the university and community a resource for the talent, skill, and experience of a still-vigorous generation of educators